

11-1-2009

Technology in Practice. Your Desktop: The Movie

Meredith G. Farkas

Portland State University, meredith.farkas@pcc.edu

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/ulib_fac



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Citation Details

Farkas, M. (2009). Your Desktop: The Movie. *American Libraries*, 40(11), 33.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Library Faculty Publications and Presentations by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. For more information, please contact pdxscholar@pdx.edu.

Your Desktop: The Movie

Screencasting software for library instruction

by Meredith Farkas

In virtually all libraries today, there will be many more people using the library than just those who come through the door. Our patrons are increasingly accessing our resources and services virtually, to the point where some never use the physical library at all. This has challenged libraries to find creative ways to provide comparable library services in the online medium, essentially making their web presence a virtual library branch.

One service all libraries provide to patrons is instruction, whether we are teaching patrons how to use a database, create an e-mail account, or do a medical literature review. In many libraries, however, this instruction still takes place only face-to-face, or, at best, via e-mail, IM, or phone. For our virtual services to be comparable to those we provide face-to-face, we need to find ways to provide instruction that is as close as possible to what a patron would get at the library.

Ready for your closeup

Fortunately, technologies exist that allow library staff to easily create engaging and even interactive asynchronous video instruction. A screencast is essentially a movie taken of your computer's desktop. It can show everything you do—from typing a query into a search box, to clicking on a link, to resizing a window and more. In addition, most software allows you to do post-production editing of the recorded content so you can create a more polished and con-

cise product. Users can add captions, audio narration, and highlighting, and even zoom in on certain elements they wish to em-

phasize. A few software options enable the creation of quizzes and other interactive components that require users to actually take a correct action for the movie to continue.

Screencasting software is great for library tutorials. Instead of offering a list of instructions on how to use a database, a screencast concretely shows the librarian going into the database and executing searches. It appeals to all learning styles since it can contain visual, audio, and hands-on components.

Screencasts can be used to provide instruction on any computer activity. Orange County (Fla.) Public Library illustrates a variety of ways that screencasts can be used to provide library instruction (ocls.info/Virtual/tutorials/). In addition to offering screencasts on using local resources, such as the catalog and databases, OCPL also has screencasts on how to subscribe to RSS feeds and connect wirelessly.

MIT Libraries offers many concise and targeted screencasts on how to use its resources (libguides.mit.edu/video/). Instead of having a single screencast on using the catalog, there are a variety of short screencasts on how to do specific



Show everything you do—from typing a query into a search box, to clicking on a link, to resizing a window.

things with the catalog, which appeals to students who likely just want to know how to accomplish a specific task. In an alternative approach,

librarians at the University of Wisconsin in Madison created an introductory research tutorial series that introduces key elements of the process (clue.library.wisc.edu).

Years ago this sort of software cost several hundred dollars, but there now exist free and low-cost options as well—including some screencasting tools that are used directly from the web without having to download or install software. Screencasts are exported into a variety of different formats, depending on the software you use, and can then be uploaded to your library's server or a variety of free video-sharing sites, such as YouTube or blip.tv.

For libraries that are struggling with how to provide instruction to a population that is increasingly utilizing services online, screencasting allows us to provide quality point-of-need instruction asynchronously in a way that appeals to people of all learning styles. ■

MEREDITH FARKAS is head of instructional initiatives at Norwich University in Northfield, Vermont, and part-time faculty at San Jose State University School of Library and Information Science. She blogs at *Information Wants to Be Free* and created *Library Success: A Best Practices Wiki*. Contact her at librarysuccess@gmail.com.

Copyright of American Libraries is the property of American Library Association and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.